

Dear Neighbor,

I want to bring you up to date on initiatives and legislative accomplishments from the recently concluded special sessions. You will find this information summarized in this newsletter, and I hope that you will take a moment to read it through.

In recent years, the work of the General Assembly has not been limited to the constitutionally established regular session. Many significant initiatives have become law during "special sessions." While the legislature is, in theory, an institution which operates part-time, we also seek to respond to emergencies to ensure that we meet our responsibilities and your expectations.

As Senate Majority Leader, I have the privilege and pleasure to work closely with Senator Toni Harp, Senator Joe Crisco and the state representatives from New Haven and Hamden to ensure that the General Assembly responds effectively to the needs and concerns of the people of our state.

My very best wishes in the New Year.

Martin Looney

Martin Looney
State Senator, 11th District
Senate Majority Leader



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2005 SPECIAL SESSIONS

Although the 2005 legislative session ended in June, we have been meeting in special sessions in order to target critical issues affecting healthcare coverage, energy, public safety and reform of our campaign system:

Campaign Finance Reform

As a legislator who has sponsored and advocated public funding of campaigns for more than 20 years, I am proud to report to you that the General Assembly recently enacted landmark campaign finance reform legislation that is regarded as the strongest in the country. The new act provides public financing for legislative and statewide campaigns beginning after this year's elections. This act also bans lobbyist and state contractor contributions to candidates for state offices and will severely limit the influence of special interests.

In addition, the legislation establishes a pilot program that allows three municipalities to publicly finance campaigns for the offices of mayor, town clerk and local legislative bodies under the supervision and direction of the State Elections Enforcement Commission.

HUSKY for Children

It was imperative that the General Assembly take action once the Department of Social Services announced that 2,200 children would lose coverage from the HUSKY health insurance program because their families could not afford the increase in premiums. The bill we passed restored funding to the state budget thereby preventing higher premiums from taking effect.



Healthcare Benefits

ConnPACE and Medicare Part D: Many seniors who take advantage of Connecticut's excellent prescription drug program, ConnPACE, and certain Medicaid recipients are concerned about coverage gaps once Medicare Part D takes effect. Recently passed legislation ensures that these individuals will continue to receive the same comprehensive coverage at no additional cost. The CHOICES Program provides information and can answer questions about Medicare Part D. The program's toll-free phone number is **1-800-994-9422**.

Energy Assistance

With record energy prices expected this winter, a bill was approved to help low- and moderate-income families cope with rising costs for energy. The energy assistance bill 1) increases benefits for eligible households; 2) provides new funding under the Contingency Heating Assistance Program; and 3) applies a sales tax exemption from November 25, 2005-April 1, 2006 on certain weatherization products, including certain furnaces. For more information, contact the Department of Social Services at **1-800-842-1132**.